

## Interview with Virginia L. Edwards

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

VIRGINIA L. EDWARDS

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: May 13, 2003

Copyright 2003 ADST

Q: Today is the 13th of May, 2003. This is an interview with Virginia L. Edwards and it is being done on behalf of the Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training. I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. To begin with, could you tell me when and where you were born?

EDWARDS: I was born July 15, 1915 in Brunswick County. We lived about 12 miles from Lawrenceville, Virginia. That's the county seat and the midwife sent my birth certificate. "Annie Walker," her mark right there, directly to Lawrenceville.

Q: *Well, Brunswick County is located where?*

EDWARDS: Well, I'll have to draw a map of Virginia, but Brunswick is right here. It is 70 miles west from Norfolk and 60 miles south of Petersburg, 200 miles from here (we are talking DC).

Q: *Yes, I think I know where it is.*

EDWARDS: Our country is about a mile from the Carolina line, righwhere Lake Gaston is.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about first, your father's family and then your mother's family?

## Library of Congress

EDWARDS: Yes.

*Q: Let's do your father's first.*

EDWARDS: My father is Edwards, James Frank Edwards. He was of a family of about six children, I believe. He was the fourth boy then settled in the Tidewater section of Virginia and there they were farmers. I never found out what boat they came on from Wales, but I know they didn't have a boat. They came in to the Isle of Wight County and then the territory lines were drawn through Tidewater so that what they were in was Southampton County and they had the farm of about 300 acres, in the forks of the rivers, the Chowan and the Blackwater. It was a big, important thing to them that they farm; though all the time after Papa came away he did something besides farming before he came away.

*Q: Was your father's family, they were farmers?*

EDWARDS: They were farmers, but Papa, have you ever heard of thCamp Manufacturing Company?

*Q: Yes, I think I have.*

EDWARDS: It was changed to Allied Paper or something like that, but he was considered their best timber estimator. It was said he could walk across a stand of timber this way and across that way and tell you the number of feet and the type of wood. He learned it all by himself.

*Q: He was in the lumber business.*

EDWARDS: He was, yes. Q: So was my father.

EDWARDS: Really?

*Q: Yes. Now, did he go to college?*

## Library of Congress

EDWARDS: No, never did. Oh, I shouldn't even tell you this. Nobody in the world knows this, but he used to hate people who would get educated and tried to buffalo everybody. He called them educated fools. He thought there was nothing to substitute for common sense.

*Q: Oh, yes, well, I mean, the works. How about your mother's family? Where did they come from?*

EDWARDS: On my mother's side I had a very interesting background. She was of Brunswick County in Virginia and she lived a little bit out of town with her father who was John Braswell and her mother Cornelia. Cornelia was from the Lightfoot family and John Braswell was a wonderful person. Neither one was professional in training, but Cornelia had very special qualities. I have a picture right here. She was considered the best horse woman in the county, the best needle woman in the county, but someone told me this and I shouldn't even tell you this story, but she thought she was a little bit "above" being a Lightfoot. You know, coming down from the Lightfoots. So we thought it was something bad in her personality to feel "above." I don't know what she did, after her last child, Cornelia, one of my favorite, favorite aunts, was born. They said that she just threw a little fit. She wasn't going to do anything else. So, she just lay around in bed. Mama said she had to prepare her meals for her as she was the only one whose food she preferred. I don't think she ever even saw a doctor. But anyway after some years she just died and she was buried.

*Q: No, no, just to get a feel. The Lightfoot family was well-known family in Virginia and your mother came from that.*

EDWARDS: They say that Philip who was in Williamsburg sent son John up to Brunswick to take care of the plantation and we are not directly descended from John. The Lightfoot family couldn't have gotten the name except through that John who was sent up there.

## Library of Congress

*Q: Well, now, you grew up in, did you grow up kind of on a farm?*

EDWARDS: Yes, see the thing about it was, well after Papa, he was doing the timber and then he came to Brunswick. There he met my mother and all of her family. He went up there with the timber company, because Camp was moving up there to get whatever timber they could find. He was up there with his brother, Jesse the older brother, they both took their fiddles and they would play in all these places around there. At this time I gave up farming for a while.

*Q: They played fiddles?*

EDWARDS: For square dancing, yes.

*Q: Wonderful.*

EDWARDS: Yes, fiddles. We had a wonderful story about the fiddle, too, \_\_\_\_\_ we call it. He met Mama and some other people, but anyway fell in love with her and married her and stayed in Brunswick and gave up timber and went back to farming, but he didn't have a farm. His father's farm was way down between the Chowan and the Blackwater Rivers. So, he was a tenant farmer, you could call him sharecropper, all of his life until he died. I'm sure he was one of the best farmers you would find anywhere. In fact, when it came to church, he didn't go to church; he was walking along his planted rows in the fields every Sunday all along the roads like this. He was a wonderful farmer. Nobody else in our immediate family knew or even understood farming the way he did. We lived on the farm all of our lives and I knew how to chop cotton and pick cotton and do the easy jobs. I grew up there and he farmed there. The thing about it that I think is so remarkable was that he had a big family. He had three children by his first wife who died before Mama married him and then he had four of us. We all survived on the farm by our own hands. We had no land, no nada, but we farmed. Everything we owned we grew, all of our food, all of our animals, everything. We made

## Library of Congress

our clothes. We had no problem ever, ever about money. For one thing, we never had any money, but farming is what Papa did all of his life and we lived on the farm. We knew what farm life was. All of us left the farm when we all came away from home afterwards.

*Q: Was the Civil War something that you talked about a lot? Wathat part of your family heritage at all?*

EDWARDS: No, it really wasn't. The records will show that I had an Edwards ancestor (Newitt) who was up there, a Revolutionary soldier, and on down here another generation or something. Then Mills, Papa's papa, played the fiddle in the Civil War. He's the one that brought this violin back that Papa had all of his life, that great thing from Germany, a very good Hopf violin. But, I never knew Mills. He was a grandfather I never knew. I never even knew his wife, who was Elizabeth Cobb. You may find a book in the Library of Congress called The Cobbs of Tidewater. Elizabeth Cobb was my paternal grandmother.

*Q: Well, then, what was education like for you?*

EDWARDS: Oh, well, the thing about it was that I was taught in a two room country school beginning when I was five. Yes, let's see, Papa got into farming and kept moving from farm to farm to farm. I have a picture of the Brodnax farm. Real nice farm, that's where I was born. That's not his farm, but I have a picture of the old fellow who owned it; the farm was given to him by his mother. Then, let's see. what I can tell you about? Oh, school. So, when I was five we moved across the creek to another big, big farm. The Riggins farm. I have a picture of that one in my apartment here, too. Home was always so important to us. We stayed there until I came away from home, but concerning school, by that time I could walk with the other children to school. It was about a mile up the road. They let these little legs go along with them and I wasn't even supposed to be in school starting a year too early. As it happened the teacher kept me there and I kept making grades and at the end I had graduated. I had to leave in 7th and go up to a nearby town on the school bus, LaCrosse, Virginia, and graduated at age 14. So, that's the way it was. I just sort of fell into

## Library of Congress

a place where if you could just have the books, people would be good to you and listen to you.

*Q: So, you graduated from high school?*

EDWARDS: At age 14, yes.

*Q: What did you particularly like in school?*

EDWARDS: I liked everything I suppose, literature, languages, not so much language. I did study Latin in high school. I've always loved languages, loved the words, loved what words can say and what they can be made to mean. Science, nothing, math nothing, but the literature and the poetry I did love.

*Q: Did you learn much about the outside world at this time?*

EDWARDS: No, except about King Arthur of the round table. I read these things. I'd get under a rose tree and enter a different world altogether. I never knew anything. Of course we'd go to Church and we'd see our friends there. We knew they were farming the way we were farming. That was on Sunday, but with regard to knowing what Richmond, a distance away, was like, I didn't really go to Richmond until I was pretty old. I've forgotten exactly, but I was so scared. When I got in the big city, I wouldn't even walk around the block.

*Q: A real country girl.*

EDWARDS: Yes, real, real country girl.

*Q: Well, now you graduated from high school then in 1929.*

EDWARDS: 1930.

*Q: 1930, the Depression was just, but in a way did the Depression affect you all?*

## Library of Congress

EDWARDS: We didn't even know there was a Depression. We had no money ever and had everything we needed to eat and we had a little horse and buggy we could ride to Church or wherever; and Papa would bring back whatever we had to have from the country store which was practically nothing. We didn't know there was a Depression. Had no money to lose. None to spend and Mama knew always how to do clothes and redo them and dye them and whatever. I couldn't go to college and I was at home a long time, a number of years, and couldn't go to college. Then my older sister took a job; our mother had given her some money that her father gave her and sent her to a business school and my sister was working in Richmond. The rule was that she was supposed to send us to college and she had practically nothing herself because she didn't have anything but a business school education. Then this man from Blackstone came down to see us one day and to get me to go up to Blackstone, he wanted to. No, Blacksburg, I suppose. He wanted me to go and he needed more money than we could come up with so Mama said she just couldn't borrow the rest that she would need, so I didn't go. Then when my younger sister who was two years behind me came along, my older sister was not going to leave her at home. So, she sent her up to Averett College and it wasn't until long after that that I made some way to get into Richmond. Oh, I know, by that time my sister was living up there and had girls in a boarding house. She would let me come up there and then one time she borrowed some money from the bank for me, like 250 or something, so that I could take a business course. The business school was in Richmond. So, I went there and when I got through the business course they gave me a job. But this was a lucky thing, too. Everything was lucky because the person that they sent me to was a close friend of the family that my sister was working for. They thought that it was Lila, if I knew Lila. Lila said that I was all right, so they took me to the State Department of Health in Richmond, State Office Building, where I was accepted in my first job in the Crippled Children's Bureau, and I didn't know a word of medicine or anything though I did keep a little medical dictionary on my desk at all times.

*Q: How old were you then?*

## Library of Congress

EDWARDS: I don't even have a list showing when I went to work with them, but it was about 1937 or 1938. I left there and went to Washington in '41 just when the war started because I had met some girls there who told me all about Washington. I took a Civil Service Examination and in a few days I was up here working, but I think it was '37 that I, '37 to '41 that I was in the State Department of Health in Richmond. Well, if you could figure from '37, I was born in '15, so I was about 22 when I went there..

*Q: Well, now, what prompted you to go to Washington?*

EDWARDS: Oh, there were some girls who were staying at my sister's boarding house. They told me all of these great things about Washington. I was interested and asked how I could do it, too? They said, you just go to the Post Office and take an exam and that's what I did and I passed.

*Q: So, when you came up here in 1941, what did they do with you?*

EDWARDS: Well, immediately they sent me to the Office of Naval Intelligence over at the munitions building and I worked over there for a captain, no not for Captain Finn. I was working in his department, Captain Finn, lieutenants, etc. So, after the war began, see that was July of '41 and December is when they shot us, I mean the Japanese, you know. So, they, as soon as the war began Captain Finn and some of the other Naval Intelligence people decided that they would start a censorship office and they picked us up out of Naval Intelligence and put us into the Office of Censorship created by the Executive Order. So, then they sent us up to Arlington a whole building of our own, not building, but you know, offices. I was working for Commander Padgett. I typed the first rules for censoring cables. So, they worked out rules and I typed them down and when we got through I said, may I do an index, and they said yes, so I did the index, too. Then they sent us downtown to a nicer building. We grew, so many people came and joined our group, just censoring cables. So, we went down to 7th and Pennsylvania, the Federal Trade



## Library of Congress

Commission building, and that's where they put us up on the top floor. We were hidden away up there and we stayed there all during the war.

*Q: Would you be reading the cables?*

EDWARDS: No, no. I was working as a secretary in what you called the Rules and Regulations Department of the Office of Censorship. Captain Finn was the man at the head of it. I've forgotten some of the names now, but Larry Gunther was one of them, was one of the cute ones I worked for. Lieutenant Quinn, that's right, Quinn. I've forgotten some of the others, but there were four or five people in there, but I was doing the typing. What we did was to keep a file of cables and drafts. We were authorized to send cable messages if you have an approved signature you might say on these. I wasn't in the coding and encoding at all, decoding at all, but I was doing the typing. So, we'd have to keep a file of all those who had a cable address and we'd draft the cables. I remember one time we had some people who came over from one of the Swiss companies. I've forgotten right now, but everybody had to have a cable address. Now, in that building we had two other departments, the post office department for censoring and the army for censoring. My office was involved only in censoring for the Navy.

*Q: How was life here then?*

EDWARDS: Just as nice as it could be. First of all, when I first came to Washington, a friend of mine drove me up in his old Buick. It was a friend of mine from the office, who was a relative of a doctor in my office. She was coming to get a job in the Marines and I was coming to get a job in the Navy and she knew about someone whom she could live with in Arlington, Mrs. Schwartz. She had a little red brick house over there and my friend and I lived right there. So, we had a good time. We all had to take a bus. As long as I had my office over there, it was not far to go. Later when we got to ride all the way into town, our life was different. I mean we took different paths after we left the bedroom and went this way and that way, but life was really all right and after we moved downtown, we lost

## Library of Congress

the way. But I did, I would get a ride to Richmond and back with her and this lovely boy who was her boyfriend who worked in the Federal Reserve or something like that. They both have died since then. I won't even get off the track on that, they had Alzheimer's. I mean you don't die from that, but anyway, we, that's what life was like here and I could then ride back and forth. I was home in Richmond that day and was having lunch when I heard about the Japanese. We knew that things would be different and by the time we came back to Washington, there were fixed bayonets in front of our Navy building. Soon after that I found a place to live in a girls boarding house in Washington after we had done this Arlington thing. After we did the Arlington thing and had to work down in FTC [Federal Trade Commission], a woman from home in Virginia who had a girl's boarding house over here on Irving Street. You may not know Washington, but up on Irving Street, very near Right Creek Park. I stayed with her all during the war years, and she had 12 girls there. They all had names, you know, working for this senator and that senator and I was the only one not working on the Hill. We had wonderful food and we had no problem. We all gave our checks to "Mama T" along with our food ration cards and were provided for in the dining room lavishly.

*Q: Ration coupons.*

EDWARDS: Ration coupons to her. She gave them to her friend who had this great country store, where he worked. We never lacked for food and she had this wonderful cook called Rosebud. We never had any trouble.

*Q: How did you end up in the State Department?*

EDWARDS: Well, then after I finished this Censorship arrangement, the government wanted to transfer every one of us as a block to the State Department, all secretaries. I said, no, I don't want to do it. I went to a resort hotel and worked down in Mountain Lake, Virginia, that summer and came back and I decided that I wanted to go to the State Department. I applied and went over there and they took me over there and interviewed

## Library of Congress

me and sent me off on KLM to Turkey. I'll tell you the big joke about that. They said it was to Europe. I said, "Oh, that's wonderful. I want to go to London." They said, no, Turkey, "but that's not Europe." They were organizing in such a way EMENA [Europe, Middle East and North Africa] included Turkey. That's how they got me to Turkey.

*Q: When did you get into the State Department, what year?*

EDWARDS: Let's see, well, Turkey. I remember that '51 is the time I first went, that's it to Turkey.

*Q: In 1951.*

EDWARDS: '51 to '54.

*Q: All right.*

EDWARDS: Those were my first two years because you got in in late October wearing those wool dresses feeling so hot and getting out early two years later, so that's when I got in and I just stayed in and out and in and out.

*Q: Well, 1951 to '54.*

EDWARDS: Yes.

*Q: What was your job in Turkey?*

EDWARDS: I was working in those days, my first assignment, I've told you about my arrival in Turkey, haven't I, and not a word in Turkish?

*Q: How did that come out?*

EDWARDS: The fact was that I did not know that there would be no one to meet me. They sent me by plane, as I told you, by KLM, Scandinavian. I had to stay in the guest quarters

## Library of Congress

overnight in Istanbul and was going by the Orient Express the next day through Ankara, but the thing about it was that it was Turkey. So, we got right in Ankara in the morning, early Friday morning, because the train was an overnight one. There was nobody to meet me, and the conductor said there was a man right there who worked at the American Embassy and he could take me with him to the Embassy in downtown Ankara. So, he came and told me he was from the “sefareti” and I didn't know until later that American Sefareti is the Turkish word for American Embassy. He said he would take me there, so I rode with him there, so that's the way I got in with no Turkish. Later on, the State Department in all these countries gave us 14 units of the language if we wanted. Of course, they almost insisted we take it, and I loved it!

*Q: Well, now, what type of work were you doing?*

EDWARDS: Oh, I was then put to work right away in what they called the Starch group. There was this old Elmer Starch who was from Montana and they always called him Dr. Starch, but he was not really a doctor and he wanted to make everybody understand he was not a doctor, but Mr. Starch had gathered all of these agriculture people from his state, Montana, whatever, or some nearby state, in the fields of dairy and agriculture, crops and I've forgotten what they were. He knew the best people in agriculture to bring to Turkey. Our job was to help Turkey's agricultural program. I knew secretarial work. Any place I worked, I did secretarial work. We in Turkey were helping on the very first Marshall Plan program.

*Q: This was part of the Marshall Plan?*

EDWARDS: Yes, exactly. We had this wonderful situation. We got to know everybody. They got to know their counterparts. Our counterparts were the boys who moved things in the offices, and the interpreters were so good. They had had to learn some English from us to give the agriculture interpreter. They educated them and Mrs. Sengelli was one. I've forgotten the name of the other one.

## Library of Congress

*Q: Well, then what were you doing?*

EDWARDS: Secretarial. I kept the records, too. I would put the cross reference too so that if somebody wanted to find something and they couldn't, then I would say, well, try so and so and they'd find it.

*Q: What was Turkey like when you were there?*

EDWARDS: It was nice as could be. In fact, I always felt at home from the minute I arrived and since it was the beginning of the Marshall Plan, great groups of us got there at one time and we had these girls, all of us, staying at the old Yuksel Palas hotel. We just thought it was wonderful. We could go to work, still didn't know any Turkish, but could pick it up from other people. Then after we'd been there, we'd learn our way around and find an apartment. So, two of us went off and got an apartment. That was what it was when we first went there, we didn't know anything. We were close from the very beginning. I remember getting together in the bedrooms after we'd go upstairs and we'd sort of get together at night in our room to room upstairs. They would say, "now you know, they told us to be careful what we say, because the walls have ears." So, we had to be pretty careful.

*Q: What was Ankara like in those days?*

EDWARDS: It was really nice. I lived downtown. I mean after I got my apartment. It was the second floor of a large house that was owned by the diplomats at 39A Mithat Pasa Caddesi in downtown Yenisehir. The old city, Ulus, was way over there in the east. We found our way there, too and there was a wonderful dining place over there up at Ulus. I'll tell you about that later if you like. I wasn't afraid at all. I'd go into some of these completely unknown places. They'd give me some tea and I'd sit there, with not much Turkish at all. It was just nice as could be. The people downstairs where we lived were nice as could be. The ambassador's wife had a boy, a houseboy, who would bring things upstairs, fruit

## Library of Congress

from the orchard. I felt real bad about this, but he wanted to get my coffee dregs because they had the Turkish kind, but he wanted to get some of the coffee dregs. I just drank it one time and hardly used it and he had cooked the dregs again and ground them and did something with them, I don't know what.

*Q: Oh, yes, you can get some more out of it.*

EDWARDS: I'm sorry, now looking back on it, that I didn't give hipounds. He was young, so we had that.

*Q: The people you worked for, who were you working for?*

EDWARDS: Well, I was working for the Starch group in the Agency for International Development. In those days you probably may or may not know it was the ECA, FOA, MSA, well, much later it was called AID, well, it was that group.

*Q: Did you get out on any field trips or anything like that?*

EDWARDS: No, not officially, I would never have gone on a field trip as a secretary, but many times while I was in Turkey (I was there two years and we went out and did great things), there was a girl in our office who was Elly Vithynos, a Greek girl (you know, the Greeks had a pretty hard time there). For a while she went out and she came back in and she was working up in the business office. She conducted a tour for us to the Holy Land. I have 100 photos and a story this long to the Holy Land. We did other things and various others. No field trips, but we saw a lot of the countryside, thanks to Elly and various other people. You could also rent a taxi. We had a bad joke about the taxi driver, I'll tell you about that later.

*Q: What about the relations with the rest of the embassy? Were you part?*

EDWARDS: Yes, at that time I wasn't that close to them, but I felt part of them and seems to me I knew his name, but I don't remember now. Oh, there was one Mabel Wright who

## Library of Congress

was a really nice person to me and she had lived in Japan for a while and some other places. She had me take care of her cats one time and I'm scared to death of cats, but I don't remember, but I don't remember that we were really caught up so much in the embassy work. As an example, if one person gave a party, everybody in our mission would go to it, but I'm not sure, in my case; there wasn't much crossing over in that, except that time. Later on when I went back for a second tour of duty in the same country, ten years later, Kathy the secretary to the ambassador was always on the phone to me to be sure that I had scheduled the calendar right because I worked for the Mission Director and she worked for the Ambassador and those two had to keep together.

*Q: Well, did you feel there was any threat or was there any problebeing in Turkey?*

EDWARDS: No, never. I never felt afraid. Never, never did the treat me in any way but the most friendly way.

*Q: You were there to 1954 was it?*

EDWARDS: From '51 to early '54 and then I went back again in '60 and stayed until '62.

*Q: Well, let's talk about '54, where did you go?*

EDWARDS: Oh, then I came home. That was the end of that tour and then I stayed in Washington for probably for much, you know we had backups and they'd send us wherever they needed us to. Then along came Mr. Paul Rose from Kathmandu and he needed a secretary because his secretary with all that groaning you might say. She had gone onto higher and better things and he needed a secretary and he wanted to know if I would come. So, I went with him to Nepal, Kathmandu and I was there from '55 to '57.

*Q: What was Nepal like at that stage?*

EDWARDS: I've got a poem you can read.

## Library of Congress

*Q: Well, this is a written thing.*

EDWARDS: I know it.

*Q: It's spoken.*

EDWARDS: I know it, but the thing about it was that, well, people asked me, did you feel so terribly cut off from the rest of the world and I said, "no, you felt that you were on top of the world" and you always felt that way. There were great ridges all around so we could go for hikes on weekends if we like, you know, go to the first ridge, even spend the night up there if we liked. We spend time over at the Prime Minister's house; we stayed once up there. Then everybody around the compound had parties, everybody had parties. They had plenty of food. We had a connection with the Great Eastern Store down there in Calcutta and they would fly the planes down there and get everything we wanted including all the food we'd like to have, the English cream for our coffee and all sorts of things. You could have bottles of Scotch; they'd fly that up to us. We had everything that you possibly needed there. Locally, you could buy things, but we really didn't eat much from the local markets. Not much. The people around the compound were so friendly they had gardens. They'd grow strawberries; we'd get all the strawberries we wanted. They'd grow something else and everybody would give everything to everybody. Always had good things to eat.

*Q: What type of work was the AID mission doing in Nepal?*

EDWARDS: Well, I was working for the Mission Director in those days. That was different from working for Agriculture. I was working here and we had these various departments and I worked for the director who supervised all of these persons. State highway, public administration. Herman Holiday, you remember him? You may not know him, but he was a great ball player, well he was on community development and health and education and various department of the government. Mr. Paul Rose apparently was the one who worked



## Library of Congress

for the mission to find out what they needed and that was what we brought technicians over to do.

*Q: Did you all fit in? The embassy was quite small, wasn't it?*

EDWARDS: Oh, yes, we were it. They had no embassy until long after I left and Mr. Paul Rose had to be everything. He had to relate to the king, to the Prime Minister, all the ministers around and everybody thought there was nobody like Paul Rose and they wouldn't make a decision without getting his opinion. If we had parties on the compound you'd find the king. I've got some pictures right up there, the king and queen at the party and a lot of the ministers. B.B. Pande. One night Ms. Rose asked me, she was so inclusive, to come and have dinner with them. He had brought back some peacock from Rapti Valley, and the thing about it was that it was a sacred bird in Nepal, you do not eat them. They had cooked it as chicken, but it was peacock.

*Q: Oh, my goodness. Well, you were there then '50 to?*

EDWARDS: '55 to '57.

*Q: '57. Were there any problems in the country when you were there?*

EDWARDS: No, this is the thing about it. They were always such gentle, gentle people. I can't imagine all of this stuff they've been going through. Except, may I tell you that, we may have heard a little rumble, but didn't recognize it. I remember we had this lovely boy and he was working in the program office. He was one of the two who said they were program officer, we think they were doing intelligence work. We know they also did program work. He would go, was sent over to Mr. Paul Rose's office and he would go downtown and feel around things there and come back and report to Mr. Paul Rose that he had seen some Chinese down there and they were going to do something about money. He was reporting anything he thought that would mean anything to Mr. Rose. We saw nothing, nothing at all, never anything.

## Library of Congress

We could go up to the old, what do you call monastery or something way up on the hill, where they have a lot of the llamas up there. Way up, you have to climb about 100 steps to get there. They were up there and they were praying. Down here they had another llama and another monastery, but they didn't seem to taking over. The people around there were either the Buddhists, Hindu anyway. We had a lot of Hindus there in the government. Gautama Buddha was born in Lumbini, that is part of Nepal. We didn't find anything that was frightening at all and if we had any strange people who came to the valley they had usually come to hike. We'd have these wonderful people from France or whoever, mostly Switzerland I think, hiking into the Himalayas. There was a wonderful Royal Hotel right down there. We lived in Rabi Bhawan, a palace, too. We later had to expand our office across to another palace, the Shawti Bhawan. I've forgotten how I got into this. The Royal Hotel. They would come and stay and we would have a chance to go over there and meet them all and we'd have a great time meeting these people. I have presents one of them gave me. In fact they came to my house on Christmas one time, two of the Swiss who had stopped from going on a mountain trek because the weather wasn't good. They were caught there at Christmas time and they came to my house. I had had some nice food things sent to me from home and we had this great day and then the electricity went out and they spent the time getting all reconnected and when they left there they said they had never had a better Christmas.

Q: Then you left there in 1957? Where did you go then?

EDWARDS: Yes. Let's see, '55 to '57, then I came back to Washington and I didn't take another post at that point because I stayed in Washington and worked for whatever, worked in headquarters office, did whatever they wanted me to do, I can't even remember. I can't even tell you all the people I worked with over there. I have some books over here right now given to me by a husband of one of them. Well, anyway, after that, then there was a Mr. Schwartz who was the director of that particular office that I was in and they wanted me to take this job in Israel. They were trying to build up the staff there and

## Library of Congress

Mr. Schwartz gave me the permission to go and I went and it was a bad mistake. But, then found out that he didn't like at all the person who wanted my job even before I left, didn't come out well at all. So, when I got to Israel I was working for his charming old gentleman from Sewickley, Pennsylvania, Mr. Chalfant, and he had not ever worked for the government and I had worked for the government a long number of years. He didn't really have much to do. He was a deputy. I had already worked for Mr. Van Dyke, in Turkey, who was the director, well this was the deputy. Then there was the director and Mary. Well, he and Mary did all the work. Mr. Chalfant and I did nothing. He sat there and he got on the phone and he developed film. He was sort of lost there I think and I was sort of lost, too. So, I wrote Washington that if I didn't have anymore than that to keep me busy, then I would just pay my way home. No, they wouldn't let me do that, they got me on a plane back to Turkey where I spent two more years.

*Q: So, that was when?*

EDWARDS: 1960 to '62.

*Q: '62. What were you doing in Turkey?*

EDWARDS: Well, in '62 I was there with Stuart Van Dyke.

*Q: What was his position?*

EDWARDS: Oh, I got Mr. Van Dyke, headed up because I was with Paul Rose in Kathmandu, but this was Van Dyke, he was the mission director. But the thing about it was, I was thinking about this girl this morning, Ella Lawson, she was his secretary before I got there, but she was not used to doing that type of work. I mean not at a high level. They eased her out and put me in and then when I got there I got instruction from her as to how she did things when she was sitting here and I would go to Ella, now what would you do about this. She was a wonderful, wonderful person and I'm in touch every now and then. I was working for Mr. Stuart Van Dyke, the mission director and I was there from '60 to '62.

## Library of Congress

Then my time was up, but I should tell you, he was a wonderful person, but he had this mission deputy who I've forgotten, he just, you know.

Anyway, then there was another person there, Wade Lathram. He's dead now, you'll read it in the book and find he's dead, but Wade Lathram was sitting there. He had an office and he was Economic Officer for the American Embassy, which meant he was hand in glove with Mr. Van Dyke and he would sometimes show him things that I didn't even know he had, you know. Oh, another thing about his wife, Mrs. Van Dyke was a real, real problem. She wanted us to send a car for her little boy. She would want me to send a car for her little son to go and play baseball or something. I thought I got my instructions from the boss and not from the boss's wife and I had to be as nice and as gentle as I could, not to hurt his feelings, but anyway, I got over that. Then I came home after that and that was '60 to '62.

Then when I got home they wanted to know if I wanted to go to Recife. One of the girls in the office said, no, don't go there. She was giving me a tip, don't go there. I went there and stayed two years.

*Q: Recife is in Brazil?*

EDWARDS: Yes, but the interesting part of it, you see, Brazil is big, big this way. Rio was here and that was the big capital. Recife was way over here in what they called the Nordeste; the northeast and we were the cowboys compared with these people. We lived there and we were right on the beach and it was the most beautiful beach. I'm sure the most beautiful beach anybody has ever seen. These little white sailboats would go around. That was quite a thing and that was my last post. After that I came home and soon after I got home. I was supposed to work for John Dieffendorfer who was the assistant chief. He was like some of these others, not really much of a mission chief person, but he was a nice, nice person. A woman who died here later who used to be personnel officer was posted to go down there to get it straightened out. She went down there and came to me

## Library of Congress

at my desk one day and said, "Mr. Dieffendorfer says that you can go downstairs and take somebody's place, a girl in C&R, Communications and Records." Maureen was her name, Maureen Nelson. I couldn't believe it. I thought he liked my work and that he was so dependent on me that he wouldn't think of saying "yes, you could take her." But I said, "oh, in that case I'll go right away." So, I got up and walked down there, didn't even say goodbye to him, didn't say anything, just went down there. She came back to me and said, you've got to go back up there and all that business you know. I finally stayed down there for the rest of my tour and they had to get somebody new to work for this fellow. He's a nice, nice fellow, but it was the personnel officer who really got it all mixed up. He had said that I could do it. He would release me because that girl had walked out. Well, it gave me a chance to have a really good job. So, that's where I stayed until the end of the time.

*Q: That was until '60?*

EDWARDS: '64.

*Q: '64.*

EDWARDS: That was the end and then I came home. *Q:* Then what did you do back home?

EDWARDS: Nothing, they told me when I got back home that I was free to retire. I couldn't believe it because I had had 20 some years of work, but I knew I didn't have much money, you know. So, I thought well, I better do it. Some people saw me later in the elevator and said, well, I understand you are retiring. I said, yes, they don't have to hand me my hat but once. So, I left and then started working for Mature Temps, a temporary agency. So, I went there and it was a good place and they sent me to the World Bank and in no time at all they said, "you don't have to work for them, you can go to our payroll." I said, "well, that's really nice, but you know, I've just resigned and retired from the government and I don't think you can take me here." They said, "you just leave it to us." In no time at all they had me on there, but they had me, fixed term, and I stayed there seven and a half years,

## Library of Congress

fixed term, but I had no fear. I didn't care. I mean after that I was like. I did go to work again after I left there, the World Bank and after that I had to apply for Social Security, see, because at that time, well, I mean I had to and I had to apply for this other stuff. Then I find out that you could go to another place and work and not draw Social Security or something like that. I never knew much about these things. So, I went over to George Washington. I had heard that you could do that.

*Q: The university?*

EDWARDS: Yes. I started working over there and I really did enjoy it. I just worked there until the end of time, until I retired from there. One day they told me that I had overextended my years and my time was up. Then I got out and I was working for EECS, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. That's where I learned to use the word processor.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

EDWARDS: I learned a lot of other things there, too. They said I could learn anything I could and that was one of the things I could, so that was the end of that one. I've forgotten how the end of the story goes actually. That was the last job that I did have, see. So, then I had all those retirement funds coming in from the various, the World Bank, GW, not GW, but not much from GW, like \$400 and the World Bank was just a little bit. This was \$400 a year I think, not \$400 a month. Then the other one, Social Security, I could go back and draw that and the other government, the first government, what's it called, the civil service. So, it was all finished and then after that I went to work and volunteer with the National Archives. I'd heard that you could do that. So, I went and volunteered about 13 years. Every Saturday morning from 10:00 until 1:00 I was sitting at the front desk. Actually at the Rotunda, not on the front desk this way, but at the Rotunda where you went into see the freedom documents. I was there until they temporarily closed it down in July before last because the documents were fading.

## Library of Congress

Q: Yes, *they were*.

EDWARDS: They had to reencase them and they were renovating the whole thing and when we go back in July or August, we'd go over there and see what they were doing, but I'm sure I could never work there again because they're doing all sorts of computer things. You can't just sit there and not handle them. You've got to do this computer and know exactly what you're doing. I'll never do that again, but I'll go and look at it and see what they're doing. That would be the end of the archives, but that was a great fun thing for me to do.

Q: *Oh, yes. Well, you know.*

EDWARDS: I've bored you to death.

Q: No, no, I've enjoyed this. You get back to your home in Brunswick?

EDWARDS: I have things all over my calendar. I had to go down there last weekend, no, see this is, this coming Thursday I have to see my doctor and right over here I have to go, last week I had to go to a DACOR reception at the State Department Foreign Service thing. The day before over here in April I had to go down there to my niece. They are opening up a ship company on Gaston Lake and I had to go down there. They had opening and had a ribbon cutting for that.

Q: *I see, yes.*

EDWARDS: I had to go down there for that because I had given them a small amount of money and they decided to do this kind of thing. Lake Gaston when the Kerr damn was built and the Roanoke River so overflowed and went into all the little rivulets and all the people around there that owned those lands to sell these wonderful places to people to come in from far down and whatever and build houses. Then the lake was very large and everybody would have these little putt putt things. They decided to get this in there and

## Library of Congress

cut out all of that and it was a battery, electric boats to come in there. He hopes to get that going and cut out all the dangers to the environment. So, they said they were trying to get some money together to do that and did I have anything I could spare? You're supposed to say, no, I don't have anything. It just happened that I had a rollover that was coming due just at the time they needed it. I thought well, I'll give them half of it. I mean, I'm waiting, well, who knows.

*Q: Yes. Well, I want to thank you very much. You've really been around. I must say you've seen some fascinating places.*

EDWARDS: I have this beautiful story, but you don't have time to read stories at all on this thing. When we went on Evelyn's second tour of duty in Turkey and Evelyn who was in my office and I drove all the way from Ankara over to Istanbul, I mean to Trieste and all the way back over here, for two weeks. I called it "Letter Home from the Balkans."

*Q: Well, that's great.*

EDWARDS: Then I have this beautiful story about Turkey that I told you about, "Looking Back to Turkey," and I have a pretty one of the Holy Land story and 100 color slides to match it up. I mean you can get that.

*Q: Yes.*

EDWARDS: I did see a lot and I saw more things than I've told you, but these are the ones I've written about.

*Q: Well, excellent, thank you very much.*

End of interview